



The 2014 Pengkalan Kubor by-election in the State of Kelantan, Malaysia: Electoral democracy via opposition inter-party system

Ariff Aizuddin Azlan¹, Zulkanain Abdul Rahman¹, Amer Saifude Ghazali²

¹Department of History, Faculty of Arts and Social Science, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur,

²Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur

Correspondence: Ariff Aizuddin Azlan (email: ariffaizuddinIUM@yahoo.com)

Abstract

Malaysian politics in the post-2008 has started to gain its own currency. People's proclivity towards the rapid rise of the opposition was perceived as an emerging trend due to political instability. The direction is indeed escalating in a more persuasive ways. The advent of inter-party system establishment, particularly the opposition, has provided a significant political comprehension as it grew out of the misplaced ideological attachment. People started to opt for the opposition and perceived it as the bringer of dissenting voices and awaited yardstick to ensure greater participation and pave the way for democratization. The emerging trend in the post-2008 has to a certain extent disclosed an uneasy feeling for the ruling BN in maintaining some sort of penetrated status quo. However the case was a bit different in the September 2014 Pengkalan Kubor by-election. The by-election was called to be held and witnessed the struggling competing parties, namely between BN (UMNO) and PR (PAS). This article, somehow, found that the inter-party establishment (PR) strategy did not affect much in the case of Pengkalan Kubor by-election due to certain factors, be it internal and as well as external. Thus, it led to a strong suggestion that the opposition inter-party system establishment should (re)-strategize its collective strategy, making it more adaptable to the current socio-politico milieu.

Keywords: by-election, campaign, electoral democracy, inter-party system, Opposition, Pakatan Rakyat (PR), political milieu

Introduction

The growing proclivity for conducting by-elections in the post-2008 Malaysian general elections seems to have set a path in perceiving the exact direction of Malaysian electoral politics. Without jettisoning the rest of the aspects that are deemed significant, it thus affects more or less the nature of political thoughts embedded within a defined political milieu. In the meantime, the imperative needs of having the by-election are escalated through inevitable reasons of having to comply with the conditions set by the electoral laws. The post-2008 Malaysian general elections has revealed a tremendous influx and at the same time reflected the electoral landscape under the disguise of democracy and due to this, the affection was strongly felt at the parliamentary level and as well as at the state level. In September 2014, the state of Kelantan made inroads for Pengkalan Kubor state constituency (*Dewan Undangan Negeri/DUN*) by-election to be held and parties started to take parts, be it the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) government component parties and the opposition Pakatan Rakyat (PR) coalition consisting of Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR), Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) and Democratic Action Party (DAP). This paper aims to analyses the establishment of inter-party system involving the opposition political parties (PKR, PAS and DAP) and their resilience throughout the less democratic setting in an embedded political milieu.

Opposition inter-party system and Kelantan's electoral politics

A long time ago, the idea of having a mutual understanding out of self party's restrictions came abruptly and most of it is highly influential throughout the imbalances of socio-political framework experienced under a dire circumstance. In reference to this framework, the opposition's coalition of PKR, PAS and DAP has been used as a party's determinant to measure its compatibility in a pressurized milieu. Malaysia (1963 onwards) or Malaya (before 1963), as a legitimate state, has practiced a dominant "one-party state" (Wong & Othman, 2010; Mohd. Faidz et al., 2014; Junaidi et al., 2014) since 1955 elections, except the 1969 elections where the ruling coalition, known as the 'Alliance' consisting of United Malay National Organisation (UMNO), Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) met a serious electoral dismay in terms of its performance. However, after the 1969 elections, the Alliance gained a steady victory and in 1974, the name was changed from the Alliance to Barisan Nasional (National Front/BN) and the tradition of maintaining the majority of seats at the parliamentary and state levels has continued onwards.

PAS, as the oldest opposition's party in Malaysian political history, has been posing considerable challenges towards the ruling BN government. Since its inception in November 1951 (Noor, 2004), PAS has sought to find its position in the political arena and contested in elections under the nomenclature of the opposition in each of elections held since then. As the champion of 'Islam' being the main ideological essence of the party, PAS attempted to create a robust political force that seeks to redefine its position as an Islamic-based political party that is not the product of post-colonial legacy.

As the latest party that made its own inroad into the circle of opposition and later on resorted to electoral competition, PKR or keADILan, formed in December 1998 (Allers, 2014, p. 135) in the midst of a political turmoil, has tremendously struck the whole landscape of Malaysian political setting. Anwar Ibrahim, the former deputy prime minister under Mahathir's premiership, was accused of committing promiscuity, homosexual sex, corruption and possibly treason and in the very same month (September 1998), he was sacked by his own party (UMNO) (Allers, 2014, p. 118). Out of disgruntled awareness and untimely surrounding, the crisis led to a mass participation, involving people from different ethnic background who rallied in the streets, initiated protests towards the government. This so called 'the *Reformasi*' movement occurred right before Anwar was imprisoned. Hitherto, PKR could still be regarded as one of the most remarkable opposition parties as it grew out of the spirit of reformation.

Embedded within a marginalized society along the ethnic lines, the opposition's awareness started to gain its own undivided momentum in order to improve its political maturity and at the same time to provide an ample alternative to the ruling BN government. The result of *reformasi*, somehow, has yielded a new perspective in the course of Malaysian politics where it sparked the transformation of Malay political discourse (Ufen, 2009). While waiting for November 1999 general elections to come, the opposition parties started to assemble in order to fulfill the needs of mutual cooperation in facing the future elections. In June 1999, the Malay-dominated party yet multi-ethnic, PKR or keADILan initiated a coalition with PAS, the DAP, and the Parti Rakyat Malaysia (PRM) and together the coalition was known as Barisan Alternatif (Alternative Coalition, BA). (Ufen, 2009, p. 610) BA contested the 1999 elections collectively by putting forth the idea of a "Just Malaysia", free from widespread corruption, abuse of power and crippling poverty (Moten, 2011). As the results disclosed, the opposition BA managed to garner at least 42 out 193 seats contested at the parliamentary level and maintained one state (Kelantan) and recaptured one state (Terengganu), at the state level.

However, the political joy did not last long. The creative formation of BA seemed to have reached its dead end. In fact, there are a lot of issues that involved the internal party's circulation, for example PAS. (Noor, 2004, p. 632) As an Islamist-based party, PAS has for quite some time maintained its own image as a party steered by *ulama* (religious person) and this led to a PAS's forethought in building a relationship with the DAP, a secular leftist party and PRM. Pointing to the worst scenario,

DAP's had its own stand by stating that they would never allow the implementation of an Islamic state, particularly the Islamic law of *hudud*, as proposed by PAS (Noor, 2004, p. 633). Prior to this inter-party pugnacious, DAP opted to leave BA in September 1999 and BA became merely a blank coalition, leaving it simply with just a name.

The year of 2004 provided an ample solution for the opposition's to rethink its strategy in mobilizing electorally into a greater picture. In September 2004, the release of Anwar Ibrahim marked another significant point in assessing the direction of the opposition inter-party system. The release of Anwar came with a strong reminder for BN to examine its own party and soon after that, Anwar's assumed the position of the opposition leader in the same year. Equipped with multi-party ideologies, Anwar's stood as the 'mediator' attempted to cease disputes between parties, particularly the opposition. Anwar's sound knowledge in a moderate form in orthodox Islam as well as commitment to multi-ethnicity and multi-religiosity were seen as factors that contributed towards political tranquility (Ufen, 2009, p. 615). The amicable character of Anwar had provided a bridge between secularism of DAP and Islamism of PAS and together were able to unite again under the banner of opposition attached with an Islamic political ideology. The initial assessment of the unity seemed to point to a satisfying result where the opposition gained a minor success in May 2006 Sarawak state elections. PKR obtained 1 seat and DAP recorded the highest, 7 seats while PAS lost 1 seat it contested (Woon, 2012; Amer Saifude et al., 2011).

In the wake of 2008, while waiting for the March general elections to be held, political milieu was undividedly absorbed by a strong sense of reform particularly at the grassroots level. This time, it did not focus only on the escalated opposition's movement but it transcended beyond the box. Influenced by the awareness of social media, the role of the middle class became more visible towards the de-isolation of political participation became more visible. Leading to 2008 general elections, civil organizations swiftly grasped tightly golden opportunities they saw that could be used in attaining their objectives of a just and democratic Malaysia. Platforms were set accordingly and elections were taken seriously compared to before and not only that, civilians were kept informed on issues involving political awareness, formation of issue-based alliances and crossethnic campaigns was put into a motion to be promoted widely (Moten, 2011, p. 48). At the same time, those opposition parties were asked to form a Barisan Rakyat (People's Front) (Moten, 2011) and the idea proposed was to project an electoral engineering pact that could work together and achieve the defined objectives mutually. The opposition's inter-party system was finally positively tested as in February 2008, they came to some sort of mutual understanding in terms of candidate per constituency (Ufen, 2009, p. 617). This means that a 3-corner fight in the same constituency would be avoided and parties were free to concentrate on a single contender unlike what happened previously. Consequently, the results of 2008 devastated most of the ruling BN members, be it the UMNO, the MIC, the MCA and the GERAKAN.

Excluding the 1969 elections where the Alliance lost tremendously, the 2008 elections outcome stood as an inevitable predicament for the BN. BN lost four states (Selangor, Penang, Perak and Kedah) to the opposition's and at the same time failed to maintain popular votes and worst, it lost its two-thirds of majority. The opposition obtained 82 parliamentary seats and 198 state seats compared to BN 140 parliamentary seats and 307 for state seats (Ooi, Johan & Lee, 2008). The impact of this inter-party system was identical throughout the competition in constituencies with a heterogenous ethnic composition (mixed seats) where the ethnic minorities turned away from the BN (Ufen, 2009, p. 618). The tsunami of voters really caught a serious attention of the ruling BN to reconsider its implemented policies that had caused the irk of the ruled during the past five years. In order to take the said impressive achievement seriously, the opposition's (PKR, PAS and DAP) formed the Pakatan Rakyat (People's Alliance/PR) on 1 April 2008, a formal alliance (Ufen, 2009). PR now made its own parliamentary inroads and this provided an access for the legislative process to take place and it was the same at the state level (states captured by PR; Selangor, Perak, Penang and Kedah). The outcome of 2008 led to a greater democratization where voters started to swing their mood throughout the ballots. Based on statistical records, PR won 50.85 per cent of popular votes and BN could secure only 46.87 per cent of popular

votes (Guan, 2013). The irony of the outcome however remained the same where the winning of popular votes means the denial of access towards the parliament practically.

As for the state of Kelantan, the heartland of the Malays in the east coast, recaptured by PAS in 1990 from the BN, has proven to be the source of conflict between the PAS-led government and the opposition BN historically. According to Farish A. Noor, "PAS is here to stay, and it is largely due to the efforts of PAS over the past five decades that Islam is well and truly embedded in the social, cultural, economic and political terrain of Malaysia" (Noor, 2004, p. 753) (Ooi, Johan & Lee, 2008 p. 61). In validating the statement of Farish's, the outcome of 2008 elections was referred to as a significant point to confirm the above statement and not only that, Kelantan had been the only state maintained by PAS for an uninterrupted eighteen years since (Ooi, Johan & Lee, 2008, pp. 61-63). Compared to Terengganu, another Malay-dominated state, where it once dominated by PAS felt under the ruling BN. Kelantan's political history is highly fashioned by a robust electoral competition between UMNO and PAS. Tracing its electoral history in 1959 elections, PAS had been countered by UMNO-style of persuasive development during the ongoing campaigns but PAS still could win 28 out of 30 state seats (Amer Saifude, 2015).

In 1970, when Asri Muda took over the leadership of PAS due to the sudden death of Dr. Zulkifli Muhammad, he was pretty much inclined towards the condition of the party and its difficulties to gain substantial political power at the national level (Noor, 2004, p. 229). Surrounded by factors that were considered as 'external' and could give benefits to the party, Asri later on in January 1973 proclaimed that PAS would join the ruling UMNO-led Alliance at the federal and state level and Asri's decisions impacted much of the norms of Malaysian political terrain and at the same time leaving behind no Malay-Muslim opposition party to vocalize their dissenting voices (Noor, 2004, pp. 253-254). Soon after the merger took place, PAS's internal voices started to crack up (1974 onwards). Leadership was questioned in every PAS convention and calls were made from inside to leave the BN and the call was made on the basis that UMNO's supported the idea of a secular state while PAS's main objective was the implementation of an Islamic state in Malaysia (Chin, 1997). The feeling was further disgruntled when the Prime Minister (PM) Tun Abdul Razak suddenly picked his own choice, Muhamad Nasir, as the Menteri Besar (MB) of Kelantan and Asri was politically sided. In this view, Nasir was seen as a pro-federal and this begets an initial step towards the Kelantan's crisis to spark. As a result of close affiliation with UMNO, Nasir was then asked by several state assemblymen to resign and Nasir opted to join UMNO. With a federal support, Nasir refused to let go of his MB's position and this triggered an expulsion of Nasir from his own party and a vote of no-confidence was tabled. In response, the federal resorted to declaring an Emergency Rule in Kelantan from November 1977 and PAS was expelled from BN's coalition a month after that (Chin, 1997, p. 109). PAS lost the state government in the snap elections held.

Up to 1990, anti-federal feelings were aroused and later on manifested in the 1990 elections. For the second time, PAS made its own come back through electoral politics which witnessed the remarkable victory of PAS, winning all 39 state seats and thus recaptured the state of Kelantan from the BN (Salleh, 1996) and Tuan Guru Nik Aziz Nik Mat was appointed as the chief minister to lead the state of Kelantan for the rest of remaining years until the oppositional essence came to fill in the political vacuum in the post-2008.

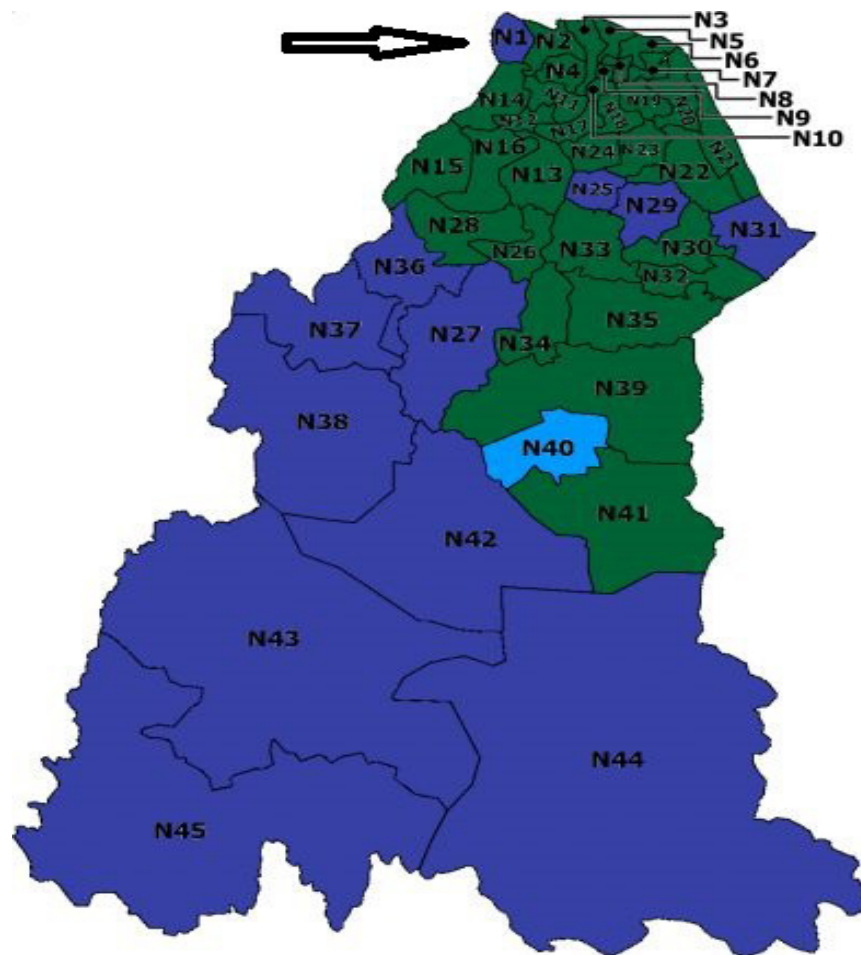


Figure 1. Electoral constituencies in the State of Kelantan

*Note: N1 is a codename for Pengkalan Kubor state constituency (DUN). ('N' = Negeri/State)

Electoral constituencies in the State of Kelantan: At a glance

Malaysia is a legitimate state consisting of 13 decentralized states. Practically, Kelantan operates under a unicameral system at its legislative setting where it consists only a single chamber or DUN. Kelantan has 14 parliamentary seats and 45 state legislative seats (Dewan Undangan Negeri/ DUN). Since 1990 when Kelantan was recaptured by the opposition PR PAS led-government, the BN, particularly UMNO, had lost its electoral grip until today at the state level. In terms of seats division (post-2013 general elections), PAS maintained 14 parliamentary seats and 33 state seats (1 seat goes to PKR/N40 Guchil). On the other hand, UMNO secured only 5 parliamentary seats and 12 state seats. N1 Pengkalan Kubor state constituency is one out of four state constituencies resided under the P19 Tumpat parliamentary seat and the rest are N2 Kelaboran, N3 Pasir Pekan and N4 Wakaf Bharu. Since 2004, Pengkalan Kubor seat has been tightly maintained by the ruling BN (UMNO). PAS fielded its candidate in 2004 but lost to UMNO and in 2008 PAS delivered the seat to PKR's candidate to contest but still lost to UMNO and again in 2013 PKR changed its candidate but lost to the same UMNO candidate as in 2004. Statistically, there are

at least 24,097 registered voters in this constituency and for racial composition, Malay recorded the highest 92 percent, others 7 percent and Chinese 1 percent.

Nomination of candidates: Opposition's inter-party contending vistas

Pengkalan Kubor by-election appeared to be an electoral platform for the newly appointed Kelantan's MB Datuk Ahmad Yaakob to show his seriousness in handling election matter. While on the other side, PR had just survived the most controversial issue in early 2014 involving the MB's crisis in the state of Selangor and this by-elections was further perceived as the extension of PR relationship in setting up electoral bases under the collective setting.

In order to mitigate the minor differences, on 23 August, PKR Vice President (VP) Azmin Ali put forth an inter-party discussion involving Kelantan's PKR and committees at the federal level to discuss further the compatibility of the seat (The Malaysian Insider, 23 August 2014). On 23 August, PKR youth chief Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad, vocalized the need of having a youth candidate to contest for Pengkalan Kubor seat, in response to UMNO's preferential (youth) candidates (Malaysiakini, 24 August 2014). Nik Nazmi's further argued that PAS already had Tumpat as its parliamentary seat and, Kelaboran, Pasir Pekan and Wakaf Bharu as state constituencies and it would be nice to have a PKR's representative for Pengkalan Kubor. On 25 August, PAS secretary general Datuk Mustapha Ali, abruptly issued a statement stating that there was no need for PAS to discuss because, in principle, the seat belonged to PKR and so far at the federal level, PAS had not made any discussion yet to decide the candidate for the said seat and PAS had been well-informed and assumed Pengkalan Kubor as a PKR seat. As for the pre-figure, there was no any robust accepted decision from both respected PR parties in steering the course of state by-election. PAS put forth its simple calculation by stating that a 'winnable' factor that could be taken into consideration as it implied that the party who contested the seat during the general elections would contest it again for the by-election but it was unnecessarily to be that way if there was a newly formulated factor (Malaysiakini, 25 August 2014).

On 29 August, the Election Commission (EC) announced September 25 as the polling date for Pengkalan Kubor by-election (The Rakyat Post, 29 August 2014). On 10 August, UMNO disclosed his candidate. BN vice chairman Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin made an official announcement in Tumpat declaring Mat Razi Mat Ali, a former Tumpat district officer, as the UMNO's candidate (Malaysiakini, 10 September 2014). A day after, Ahmad Yaakob announced Wan Rosdi Wan Ibrahim, Tumpat PAS secretary as the PAS candidate (Malaysiakini, 12 September 2014). Based on profiling, UMNO's candidate seemed to have an additional advantage over the PAS candidate. Mat Razi holds a Bachelor's Degree in Malay language and history and he is also a founder of a *madrasah* or a *pondok* (informal religious institution) in Tumpat. Tracing from his experience of being a district officer, Mat Razi would have an access towards the voters residing in Pengkalan Kubor. On the other hand, Wan Rosdi was a contractor in the field of construction, graduated from Institut Kemahiran MARA (MARA Institute of Skill) and was also a coordinator for (DUN) Pengkalan Kubor.

Campaign and issues: A counter to inter-party

The Pengkalan Kubor by-election escalated the growing performance of both sides and it was marked as an inevitable political test. For the opposition PAS-led government, this became a formidable challenge towards the root of supports and the perception towards the implemented state policies and the newly appointed state leadership. Soon after the candidacy announcement, campaign strategy set its foot within the time given. As one of the most controversial issues that dominated the scene of local political milieu, the Islamic law of *hudud* was once again became a hot debate during the campaigning session. PAS had been championing the cause of *hudud* and the idea of Islamic state most of the time. *Hudud* in this

circumstance had become the source of tension between its PR coalition DAP and BN components of MIC and GERAKAN.

Attached with ideological differences in parties like DAP and PAS, on September 12, MCA took this opportunity to give a soft warning to PAS and urged them not to implement hudud in the state of Kelantan (Malaysiakini, 12 September 2014). Datuk Kamarudin Jaffar, Tumpat Member of Parliament (MP), defended PAS and urged MCA to take oath that UMNO would cooperate with PAS in order to implement the hudud. Before the by-elections occurred, UMNO revealed their willingness in working together with PAS to make sure that the hudud law was implemented but in the midst, MCA interrupted the discussion and became one of the strongest, together with DAP, to oppose the said implementation. Apart from the ongoing debate that took place, UMNO through its women wing, under Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil as its chief, also launched a '*jalinan rakyat*' or reaching people's squad (New Straits Times, 12 September 2014). The idea behind the establishment of the squad was to reach out to voters and to carry out house-to-house campaign. On 13 September, the campaign was dominated with a theme of 'oil royalty' (*royalty minyak*). Oil royalty created a pugnacious surrounding for the contested parties to further justify each of their actions in dealing with the ongoing situation. The debate could have contributed, be it either positive or negative, towards the federal-state relationships. In 1990, when PAS legitimately assumed the state of Kelantan, Tun Mahathir, the PM at that time, immediately ceased the payment of oil royalty to PAS's administration (Malaysiakini, 13 September 2014). Since then, PAS has been carrying the voice of Kelantanese to demand the supposed to be payment to the state. On 14 September, PAS demanded BN to have the committee of oil royalty established and PAS further debated that an agreement achieved in 1975 stated that (gas and petroleum) are confined within the state's ownership (The Malaysian Insider, 14 September 2014). In facing the demand, PAS was challenged to form a committee to investigate whether it is proper for Kelantan to be granted the royalty.

The advisor of PAS electoral machinery Datuk Takiyuddin Hassan refuted the issues of oil royalty that had been played too much during the campaign (Malaysiakini, 14 September 2014). Referring it on a legal perspective, Takiyuddin was of the opinion that it was improper to discuss the royalty issue which at that time was under the court proceeding outside the court. Tired of the unending debate, Kelantan BN resorted to an agreement in matters involving oil royalty and *wangehsan* (pity money). The chairman of Kelantan BN Datuk Seri Mustapha Mohamed told that a formal agreement had been met between the Department of Federal Development (JPP) and Religious Council of Islam Kelantan (MAIK) (Malaysiakini, 14 September 2014). Mustapha clarified that the *wang ehsan* would be divided equally starting from the following January. Its implementation would involve many governmental agencies and the idea was to have a close political relationship with the PAS-led state government.

In every election studied by social scientists, the nomenclature of 'development' is hard to be separated and to a certain extent, the nomenclature itself poses a robust affiliation. According to Faisal S. Hazis, "development has long been the BN's main tool in rallying the support of the electorate in Malaysia. In every election, promises of new development projects would be pledged, ground breaking ceremonies for new projects would be carried out and completed projects would be grandiosely declared open" (Hazis, 2009, p. 96). As a matter of fact, this profound statement reflects the understanding of BN's main strategy in making its appeal towards the majority and as well as the minority. The Pengkalan Kubor by-election had revealed the participation of the minority whereby a small population of Siamese voters were found to have manifested in the so called by-election. On 16 September, in an open statement made by the Kelantan Siamese Women Association (KSWA) chairman K.C. Ngiam told that they would not let BN down and although small in number but they would give full support to the BN candidate (New Straits Times, 16 September 2014).

In order to prolong the electoral appeal on minority basis, BN's disclosed a fund with a total of RM 200,000 for 16 Siamese community schools in the whole state of Kelantan (Malaysiakini, 16 September 2014). Surely the Siamese population did not miss the by-election as the offer made by the BN led to an advance opportunity for the said community to engage indirectly towards the BN's performance. The issue of 'development' in the state had been much sensationalized and debated. It was clearly found

in every election held, and the state government in this case had been on the ‘defensive’ front while at the same time resorting to a justifying behavior. When directed (issues related to development) to the ruling BN government, they simply stated that the matter needed to be referred to the PAS-led government (Malaysiakini, 16 September 2014). As for PAS, the pressure of development was not something new to be affiliated with and in fact, it had been steadily utilized by BN as a counter-argument and also a criticism towards the state’s administration. Ironically, PAS was surprisingly found to have acknowledged the idea of development brought by BN and in a statement, Kelantan PAS deputy secretary-general Datuk Wan Abdul Rahim, recognised the existence of development and progress in the area when Pengkalan Kubor was taken over by BN in 2004 elections (New Straits Times, 17 September 2014).

Speaking of *ceramah*, as the main ground of approaching the mass, PAS secretly hid it’s supposed to be *ceramah* locations. They kept it that way as it did not want the *ceramah* sessions to be disturbed by the BN (Malaysiakini, 18 September 2014).As previously occurred, when PAS disclosed the location of its *ceramah*, BN would have the proclivity to conduct the *ceramah* side by side with PAS and when the police came, both *ceramah* were asked to stop. The event was indeed against the normal circumstances for PAS to reach out to its electoral voters. As expected by, BN once again launched its development strategy. This time it involved the members of *Ikatan Relawan Rakyat* (People’s Volunteer/RELA) as part of precautionous step to counter the different party’s ideological affiliation which BN was afraid of spreading during the ongoing campaign session. Announcement was made and an allotment of RM 200,000 was promised to set up four RELA service center operations in Pengkalan Kubor (Malaysiakini, 19 September 2014).The reason being was to appreciate the contributions and efforts of the members in handling the security matters. And now, the extension of development had been manifested in a form of promised material that was hard to be hesitated upon. Besides that, an immediate action was taken by the federal government where it openly disbursed a total of RM 500,000, RM 300,000 and RM 50,000 to each of three mosques that required renovations (New Straits Times, 22 September 2014). Such was a counter-development for PAS to embrace upon and in particular to PR inter-establishment where it decisively reflected the philosophy of a political development.

Results analysis

The by-elections were carried out as scheduled on September 25. As expected, BN’s candidate Mat Razi won handsomely the by-election. As shown in Figure 1, BN candidate defeated PAS with a majority of 2,635 and Independent with a majority of 9, 923. The average voters turnout was 17,590 (73 percent). The turnout was a slightly smaller than that of the 2013 election where it was recorded at 19, 021 (78.9 percent).

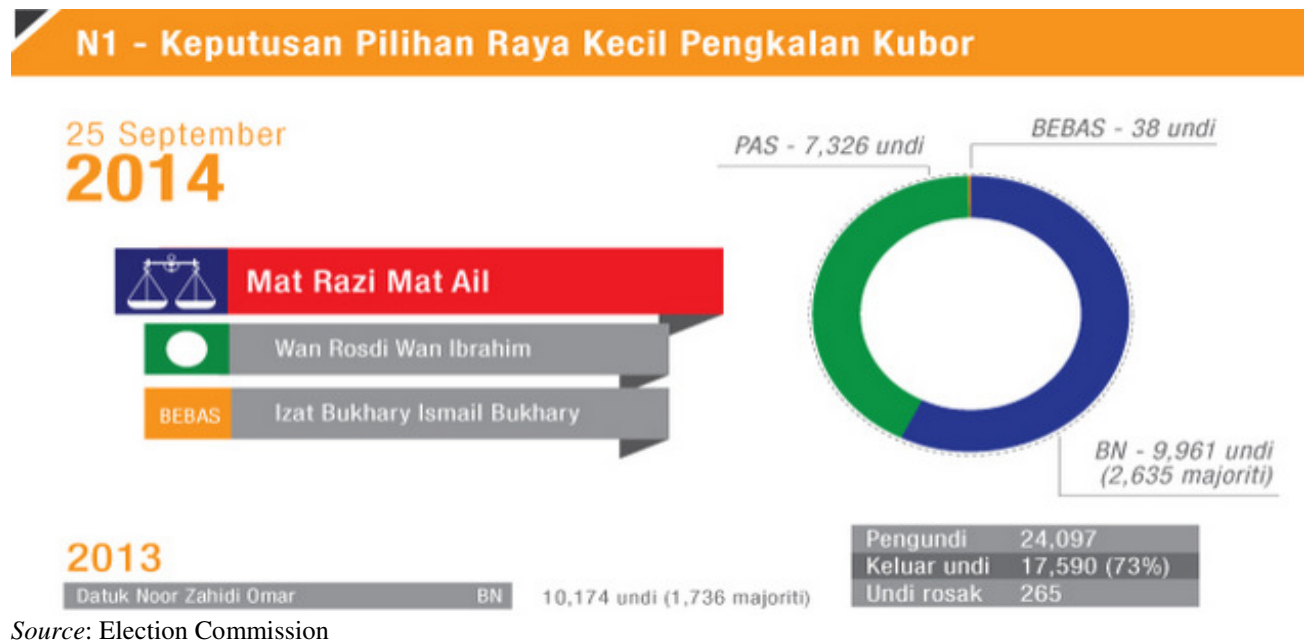


Figure 1. The result of 2014 Pengkalan Kubor by-election

The results were somehow perceived in different vistas. As for the opposition PAS-led government, the failure of its electoral machinery to recapture the seat was truly a hard day to pass by. The party that dominated most of the state and the establishment of inter-party system PR did not result in the electoral victory for them. The outcome might affect not just the parliamentary level but at the state level also. It slowly preceded the number of state legislatures and if unlucky and proven to be true in the following general elections, PAS would have none to hold into. In response to the untimely defeat, Tuan Ibrahim's gave out his statement, stating that the absence of the main PR leaders and the party's internal crisis was not part of factors that led towards the defeat (Malaysiakini, 25 September 2014). He further argued that an assistance offered by the BN towards the poor community's confined within the constituency was one of the sources that led to the loss. As known by many, the state's BN electoral machinery was incomparable. An embedded idea of planting the developmental promises and giant aids from the federal government would have required PAS to rethink its strategy. PAS youth Chief Suhaizan Kaiat, in his earlier statement, had vocalized his state of worry and uneasy in mind towards the future of PAS in the state of Kelantan (Malaysiakini, 26 September 2014).

The results also simultaneously reflected several vistas offered by local political scientists. Dr. Mohamed Mustafa, from National Council of Professor (MPN), saw that PAS had no major issues to be played off apart from its current internal crisis with PR coalition parties, this had frayed some supports towards PAS. He argued that based on remarkable records contributed by the previous BN candidate Noor Zahidi Omar, the chances for BN to win was bright (The Malaysian Insider, 24 September 2014). Adding to the statement, Che Hamdan, a local political scientist from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Dungun, opined that PAS's style of campaign in the by-election was quite gloomy and it focused only on several Voting District Centers (PDM) won by their ally (PKR) in the previous 2013 general elections. The inability of the newly appointed CM (Ahmad Yaakob) was also a factor and even though state's government was at that time under his *de facto* leadership but the failure of recapturing prevailed as it had been proven when he could not garner the voter's supports (The Malaysian Insider, 14 September 2014).

Conclusion

In a nutshell, the 2014 Pengkalan Kubor by-election placed a great emphasis on the essence of opposition's inter-party system and to what extent its involvement could manifest a mature electoral democracy. The built-in trust in a well-established inter-party system, be it the oppositional style, would have to circulate accordingly and in tandem with the majority's demand. The defeat of PAS, therefore, was perceived as a collective defeat of PR and it has given ample of reasons for the ruling BN component parties to justify its promised-based policy and thus it conceals new chapters for PAS to start again. The outcome was indeed a definite victory for BN especially in maintaining its previous status quo by using its development strategy.

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